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Deep freeze is big business
Masy Systems celebrates the future with new biorepository
By Luke Steere

PEPPERELL -- Masy Systems Inc. has a cold future.

But that's a good thing.

Late last month, the company held an open house to celebrate its new 6,200-cubic-foot Good Manufacturing Practices biorepository. Simply put, it's a big freezer. It is similar to a 2,700-cubic-foot facility that houses a six-door reach-in freezer unit that stores items at minus-115 degrees Celsius. That's minus-175 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperature aside, the only thing more telling about Masy Systems Inc. than its location was the crowd.

Pepperell is more than an hour away from the Hub, a life-sciences cluster. And among the crowd of biopharma industry reps, as well as state Treasurer Steven Grossman, state Sen. Eileen Donoghue and others, were local business owners from town who run pharmacies, insurance companies and banks.

Masy is a company that uses all of this to grow.

"Buy in Lomar, buy in Pepperell, buy in Massachusetts," said Masy President and CEO Laurie Masiello, who began the company with her husband, Executive Vice President John Masiello, in 1997.

The project was made possible by a \$2 million loan from North Middlesex Savings Bank, secured through the state Treasurer's Office Small Business Banking Partnership program. Masy used the money to purchase another Lomar Park unit and is funding the installation of the biorepository.

"In two-and-a-half years, Masy has grown from 35 to 70 employees during one of the worst economic times that's extraordinary and I look forward to continuing our partnership," Grossman said during the recent grand opening.

North Middlesex Savings Bank's chief operating officer, Walter Dwyer, spoke of Masy's humble beginnings. The company was started in the Masiellos' garage, but soon grew to occupy every room in the house except the bedroom. It eventually moved to Pepperell's Lomar Park.

"We had a lot of interest in the program, but we looked in particular at Masy," Dwyer said. "I know there are a lot of competing areas that would love to have that business, but don't have it."

Masy's sales administrator, Robyn Masiello, is married to John and Laurie's son, Validation Project Leader Chris Masiello. The Masiellos' younger son, Greg, is an IT and security supervisor whose wife, Jen, is a sales administrator.

John's brother Steve is a purchasing manager and senior validation engineer and Bob Horgan, Laurie's brother, is the vice president of finance. Quality Assistant Sarah Deware is Robyn's sister.

Biorepository Manager John Coolidge gave tours through the existing freezer facility. Coolidge said he used to work in industries like nuclear energy, where "you simply can't have failure." At Masy, he said, he brings that same ethos -- the freezers are triple backed up and the company is solely dedicated on the storage aspect.

"Shut down your freezers, make more lab space, and we'll take care of the storage," he said.

Masy's freezers are built by Raleigh, N.C.,-based Bahnson Environmental Specialties. Sub-zero temperatures are maintained by massive copper coiling, through which liquid nitrogen is pumped.

The existing freezer is comprised of two rooms. One is kept at 5 degrees Celsius, and the second at minus-20 degrees Celsius. Inside the second is the row of minus-115 degree Celsius doors.

The new Masy freezer will be a minus-75 degree Celsius space accessed through a minus-20 degrees Celsius room.